

House Bill 527
February 12, 2009
Presented by Chris Smith
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 2-12-09
HB 527

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Deputy Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

FWP appreciates the significant contribution of time and effort put forth by our volunteer hunter education instructors. These individuals give tirelessly to help make sure Montana's youth enter the field with a solid understanding of hunter safety and ethics. They are a vital link in maintaining the hunting heritage in our state.

SB 527 would, no doubt, serve as an incentive to some people to join the ranks of hunter ed instructors. Whether this is needed or not is less clear. Instructor recruitment has not been a problem to date. Most instructors volunteer based on their passion for hunting and a sincere desire to help youth enter hunting in a safe manner. FWP tries to acknowledge the contributions of our instructors by providing five year service awards. Those awards include: plaques; belt buckles; knives; coats and guns. Very rarely does the topic of additional recognition or incentives come up.

FWP is not taking a position for or against HB 527. Rather, we encourage the committee to listen to comments from others and make a decision based on that input. If the legislature does choose to advance HB 527, we would suggest a minor amendment to include bow hunter education instructors. We can easily implement the bill if it is passed and approved.